

a strong consensus that the suffering of two victims can never equal only one offense.

The moral concern of humanity extends to those unborn children who are harmed or killed in crimes against their mothers. And now, the protection of Federal law extends to those children as well. With this action, we widen the circle of compassion and inclusion in our society, and we reaffirm that the United States of America is building a culture of life.

It is now my honor to sign the Unborn Victims of Violence Act of 2004.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:57 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. H.R. 1997, approved April 1, was assigned Public Law No. 108-212.

Remarks at a National Republican Congressional Committee Dinner *April 1, 2004*

Thank you all very much. Thanks for the warm welcome. Whew! *[Laughter]* Go ahead and have a seat. Thank you. I am honored you all are here. I appreciate such a warm welcome. It's good to be with so many friends from the NRCC. By ensuring that we have a Republican majority in the House, you're helping our confident and hopeful agenda; that's what you're doing. You've had great success in the last couple of years. And all of us who represent the people are grateful for your hard work.

As a former House candidate—*[laughter]*—I have tremendous respect for anybody who runs for the Congress. My campaign back in 1978 in the 19th Congressional District didn't turn out the way I hoped. As a matter of fact, walking in here, I saw the guy who beat me. *[Laughter]* There he is. *[Laughter]* I had a great time, though. It was really an interesting campaign. I was campaigning right after Laura and I got married, so it was like an extended honeymoon. *[Laughter]* We learned a lot about each other as we drove across west Texas. Laura likes to say I even convinced her to vote for me. *[Laughter]* Unfortunately, I didn't convince enough people. *[Laughter]* I put my political career on hold for about 15 years, but I like to think things worked out all right.

This year, I'm looking forward to campaigning with a man who did win in his race for the Congress in 1978 and five times after that. Dick Cheney was a fine United States Congressman from Wyoming. He was by far the best Congressman from Wyoming. *[Laughter]* Dick Cheney is the finest Vice President our Nation has ever had, and I'm proud to have him on the ticket with me. When Dick came to Congress, the House held 277 Democrats and only 158 Republicans. Things are a lot different today, and the country is better off for it.

Thanks to your generosity and hard work, we have a strong Republican majority. And with your help, we intend to increase the Republican majority in 2004. Mr. Speaker, I can't tell you what a joy it is to work with you. Denny Hastert is solid as a rock. He's a man of his word. He's a kind and decent person. He's a man of enormous accomplishment. Denny Hastert needs to remain the Speaker of the House of Representatives for the good of the country.

I wasn't Denny's first choice to speak here; Laura was. *[Laughter]* Mr. Speaker, she sends her love to you and to all our friends out here. By the way, Laura is a fabulous First Lady for our country.

I appreciate Congressman Tom Reynolds, the chairman of the NRCC. Thank you, Tommy, for your good work. The chairman of the spring dinner is Congressman Jerry Lewis from California. Jerry, you did a fabulous job. Thank you, sir.

I'm proud of the job my fellow Texan is doing as the majority leader of the House of Representatives, Tom DeLay. He's a great majority leader. We enjoy working with the whip, Roy Blunt from Missouri, who is doing a good job of counting those votes.

I see the conference chair is with us tonight, Congresswoman Deborah Pryce from Ohio. Thank you for coming. The vice chair, Jack Kingston from Georgia, is with us tonight. Jack, thank you. The conference secretary, Congressman John Doolittle from California; Congressman Chris Cox, the policy chair from California, is with us as well. Thank you, Chris.

And finally, the only other Congressman I'm going to mention tonight is my friend

from Texas. He's about as fine a Congressman as you'll find. I'm proud to call him friend, and that's Congressman Ralph Hall.

I appreciate Angela Pregano-Knight for sharing her talents tonight, singing the national anthem. What a beautiful person, and with a great voice. And finally, Timmy Kelly is here with us. And Timmy, thanks for singing "God Bless America," and I'm glad you're here. Thanks for bringing your mom and dad with you as well.

I finally got an opponent. *[Laughter]* He's an experienced Senator. He's built up quite a record. He's been here in Washington so long, he's taken both sides of just about every issue. *[Laughter]* Senator Kerry voted for the PATRIOT Act, for NAFTA, for the No Child Left Behind Act, and for the use of force in Iraq. Now he opposes the PATRIOT Act, NAFTA, the No Child Left Behind Act, and the liberation of Iraq. He's been on both sides of many big issues. If he could find a third side, I'd imagine he'd take that one too. *[Laughter]* Someone asked my opponent why he had voted against the \$87 billion funding bill to help our troops in Iraq. Here's what he said: "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, before I voted against it." *[Laughter]* End of quote. *[Laughter]* Sure clears things up, doesn't it? *[Laughter]*

What is going to be clear is that the voters have a clear choice this year. It's a choice between keeping the tax relief that the Congress passed, tax relief that is moving this economy forward, or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. It is a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger. And I look forward to making these choices clear to the American people.

I'm ready for this campaign. I'll remind the people that working with the United States Congress, under Speaker Hastert's leadership, we've achieved great things in the past 3 years. I'll also remind them that we have a positive vision, a hopeful vision, an optimistic vision for the years ahead; a positive vision for winning the war on terror and extending peace and freedom throughout the world; a positive vision for creating jobs and promoting opportunity and compassion here at home. We will leave no doubt where we

stand, and we will win on November the 2d of this year.

The last 3 years have brought serious challenges, and working with the Congress, we've given serious answers.

When we came to office, the stock market was in decline and the economy was headed into a recession. But we acted. We worked together. We delivered historic tax relief, and now our economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation in the world.

We had to confront corporate crimes that cost people their jobs and their savings, so we worked with the United States Congress and passed strong corporate reforms and made it clear that we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning, so we pursued the terrorist enemy across the world. We've captured or killed many key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest will learn there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice.

Working with the Congress, we confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction. So we ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We freed over 50 million people, and once again America is proud to lead the armies of liberation.

When the Vice President and I came to Washington, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated, so we worked with this Congress and this leadership to give our military the resources and respect they deserve. And today, no one can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

It is the President's job to confront problems, not pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. A President needs to step up and make the hard decisions and keep his commitments, and that is how I will continue to lead our great country.

Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office and the man who is the Speaker of the House will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. Security and the prosperity of America are at stake. The other side hasn't offered much in the way of strategies to win the war or policies to expand our economy.

So far, all we hear is partisan anger, loud words. Anger is not an agenda for the future of America. We'll take on the big issues with optimism and resolve and determination, and we will make it clear that we stand ready to lead this Nation for 4 more years.

A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. Because of the leadership of Denny Hastert and Members of the United States Congress, we passed the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was the President. We have left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and helping create new jobs, American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government would have.

Oh, I hear some pessimists around our country, but I'm optimistic about our economy. I'm optimistic because we've put good policies in place, and I'm optimistic because the entrepreneurial spirit is strong and we've got the best workers in the world. Economic growth in the second half of 2003 was the fastest in nearly 20 years. Manufacturing activity is increasing. Business investment is rising. Disposable income is rising. Inflation is low. Mortgage rates are low. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. Job creation is gaining strength. We've added over 350,000 new jobs over the last 6 months. The tax relief we passed is working.

My opponent has a different view of tax relief. When we passed an increase in the child credit to help families, he voted against it. When we reduced the marriage penalty, he voted against it. When we created a lower 10-percent bracket for working families, he voted against it. When we reduced the tax rate on dividends that many seniors depend on, my opponent voted against it. When we gave small businesses a tax incentive to expand and to hire new people, he voted against it. When we passed a phaseout of the death tax, he voted no. We're beginning to see a pattern here. *[Laughter]*

Senator Kerry is one of the main opponents of tax relief in the United States Congress. But when tax increases are proposed, it's a lot easier to get a yes vote out of him. Over the years, he's voted over 350 times for higher taxes on the American people, including the biggest tax increase in American history. He supported higher gas taxes 11

times. He favored a tax increase of 50 cents a gallon. That would cost you another \$5 or more every time you fill up the tank. For that kind of money, he at least ought to throw in a car wash. *[Laughter]*

My opponent is proposing a lot of new Government spending, about \$1.7 trillion at last count, and the campaign is just beginning. He says he's going to pay for all this by raising the taxes on rich people, but he's got a problem. To cover all the new spending, he would need to eliminate every single one of the tax reductions we have passed. To pay for all his new promises, he'd still have to raise taxes on top of that. The marriage penalty would go back up. The child credit would go back up. Taxes on small businesses would rise. Even low-income people paying at the 10-percent rate would see their taxes go up. It turns out, if you have a job, a child, or a dollar to spare, Senator Kerry thinks you're rich enough to pay taxes. Fortunately, he's not going to have that chance.

Higher taxes would undermine growth and destroy jobs, just as this economy is getting stronger. To help grow the American economy and to create more jobs for our citizens, I have a better idea. We should make the tax cuts permanent.

We must do more to keep this economy growing and to create more jobs. I'm working hard with the Congress to maintain spending discipline in Washington, DC.

I have a plan to protect small-business owners and employees from the frivolous lawsuits that make it hard to create new jobs. The House of Representatives has passed good tort reform legislation, thanks to the leadership of Speaker Denny Hastert. Q02

I'm working with the leadership on a plan to control the cost of health care and to get people better access through association health care plans and tax-free health savings accounts. And the Senate needs to follow the lead of the House and pass medical liability reform. Q02

We need to knock down trade barriers and open up new markets around the world for this country's farmers and ranchers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers.

And we need a sound energy strategy. We need an energy plan to modernize our electricity system and make this country less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

On every one of these measures, the working people have got an ally in the leadership in the Republican Congress.

You know, my opponent talks about job creation, but he's against every one of these job-creating measures. Empty talk about jobs and economic isolationism will not get anyone hired. The best way to create jobs is to reelect a pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur President and United States Congress.

Our future in the world also depends on America's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious dangers. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom. Today, no friend or enemy doubts the word of the United States. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance, and the Taliban are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance, and now the dictator sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget. It's a lesson the Congress must never forget. It's a lesson this country must never forget. America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence information, and we saw a threat. The Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. The previous administration and Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our country.

In 2002, the United Nations Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein

refused to comply, so we had a choice to make: Either take the word of a madman, or take action to defend America. Faced with that choice, I will defend America every time.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat; he just didn't support my decision to remove Saddam from power. Maybe he was hoping Saddam would lose the next Iraqi election. *[Laughter]* We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. Because our coalition acted, Saddam's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the very heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free. Because we acted, America is more secure.

We still face thugs and terrorists in Iraq who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the advance of liberty. And there's a reason why. They know that a free Iraq will be a major defeat for the cause of terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake the will of the United States. America will never be intimidated by a bunch of thugs and assassins. We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq. We will defeat them there so we do not have to face them in our own country.

Other nations are helping Iraq to build a free society, because they know what we know: A free Iraq will make the whole world more secure. We stand with the Iraqi people, the brave Iraqi people, as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. These are not easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. We will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world, but only if other countries do not object. I'm all for united action, and so are our 34 coalition partners in Iraq right now. Yet, America must never outsource America's national security decisions to the leaders of other countries.

Some are skeptical that the war on terror is really a war at all. Senator Kerry said the

war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence-gathering, law enforcement operation. I disagree. Our Nation followed this approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. But the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan. They were still plotting in other nations. They were drawing up more ambitious plans. After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

Our men and women in the military are taking great risks and doing a great job. At bases across our country and the world, I've had the privilege of meeting with those who defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I've seen their great decency and unselfish courage. I can assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong, yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that help give us direction and purpose, our families, our schools, our religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our Government.

We stand for fair treatment of faith-based groups, so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for Government discrimination against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and to send people back into lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of any life as a commodity to be experimented upon, to be exploited, or to be cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law.

We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench or judges who try to remake the values of America by court order.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. The culture of this country is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you are fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. These are not one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high, the challenges are difficult, when resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I will never forget that day. Workers in hardhats were shouting, "Whatever it takes." One guy pointed at me and said, "Don't let me down." As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes. *[Applause]* Thank you all.

In these times, I've also been a witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, our capacity to meet a serious challenge, or our willingness to serve a cause greater than self-interest. But Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've

seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. We've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We will need all these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win, and the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity and hope through every corner of this country. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:08 p.m. at the Washington Hilton.

Remarks in a Discussion on Job Training in Huntington, West Virginia

April 2, 2004

The President. Thanks for coming. Please be seated. I wish Dan had said “a friend of long standing”—[laughter]—as opposed to “an old friend.” I knew him when he lived in Texas. You’ve got a good one running Marshall University here. He’s a fine fellow. He’s doing a fine job.

I’m proud to be back in Huntington. We’re going to have an interesting discussion today about how to make sure people have an opportunity to get the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century. That’s really what we’re here to talk about. We’re going to talk about how to make sure everybody’s life is optimistic and hopeful as this economy of ours grows and changes. A perfect place to do so here is at this community college, and I’m so honored to have been invited. Thank you for opening up your fantastic facility, and thank you for giving me a chance to come and talk.

By the way, right as I walked in—I want to thank the sisters. One of them said to me—probably the most important thing a President can hear is, she said, “Mr. President, I’m praying for you.” Thank you.

I want to thank the State and local officials who are here. Thanks for coming by to say hello. I think that when you finish hearing this discussion, you’re going to realize what

an important asset you have in the community college system of West Virginia and how the Federal Government and employers can work together with the community colleges to make sure people get the skills necessary to take advantage of an expanding job base.

I met a lady coming in named Robin Black. She was out there at the airport. The reason I mention Robin is, a lot of times people say the strength of America is our military. And that’s a part of our strength, and by the way, it is strong, and we intend to keep it strong. Or they say the strength of America is the fact that we’re a wealthy nation. And that’s important as well. But the true strength of the Nation is the hearts and souls of our citizens. That’s the true strength of America. And the reason I mention Robin Black is that she’s a volunteer. Robin’s sitting right there, by the way. She’s a volunteer to help people going for a job interview to look as good as they possibly can, to understand what to say. She’s a mentor to people who need help.

No, the strength of this country is the fact that we’ve got citizens from all walks of life who are willing to love a neighbor just like they’d like to be loved themselves, who are willing to work to change America one heart and one soul at a time. If you’re one of those soldiers in the army of compassion, I thank you for doing what you’re doing. You’re making a difference to our country—just like you are, Robin. Thank you.

I’m an optimist, because I fully understand America’s strengths and I’ve seen what we’ve come through. I want to remind you right quick what has happened to this country, what our economy has been through, what the America people have had to endure over the last 3 years.

We went through a recession. That means things were going backwards. That means three quarters of negative growth. Now, if you’re a small-business owner, it’s difficult to survive in a recession. If you’re somebody looking for a job, it’s hard to find a job during a recession. But we acted, and we cut the taxes on the people, which made the recession one of the shallowest recessions in economic history.

And then as we were recovering from the recession, the enemy hit us. They attacked us, and it affected us. It affected our way